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A Literature Review on Residential Child Care: An Attachment Theory Perspectives

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Abstract

The existence of residential care is a step towards protecting, nurturing and restoring children who fall into torture, neglect, family problems and poverty. The purpose of residential care is to provide child care services to ensure the safety and natural growth in terms of physical, mental, emotional and moral development of children. Based on the highlights of previous studies there are several aspects such as regulation, program quality, staff relations with occupants and frequent exchange of care centers. All these aspects are the challenges that need to be addressed which have a direct impact over the cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social development of children. In this article, the authors highlights the importance of linking the relationship between guardians or institutional staff with children in shaping the self-esteem of the occupants so that they can accept change and develop better from all aspects.

Keywords: residential care, attachment theory, role of residential care

Introduction

The majority of children accommodated in shelter are due to neglect, abuse and communication problem with parents or guardians (Raj & Raval, 2013). Living in shelter within a certain period of time will make the child vulnerable to physical, educational, social and well-being as a whole if compared to other children's polyps (Macdonald & Millen, 2012). Residential and nursing homes are the most vulnerable groups of various risks and social problems (Yampolskaya, Mowery, & Dollard, 2014). In addition to abuse and neglect, there are other factors that cause them to be in shelters and care that when they are unable to adapt to the rules of everyday life and have difficulty in regulating behavior (Yampolskaya et al., 2014). Researchers who study the long-term effects of living in shelter and care have also focused on the inherent patterns of behavior (Jacobs, 2012). They have proven that convergence concepts are closely related to the quality of life and the development of a lifelong human being (Landa & Duschinsky, 2013). The purpose of residential care is to provide child care services to ensure safety and natural growth in terms of physical, mental, emotional and moral development of children (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, 2018). Children placed here are orphans, abandoned or dumped children, children whose parents are in jail and children in need of care due to poverty (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, 2018).

The nature of the immature, naïve and incapacitated children causes them to require the attention, care and supervision of adults (Mohd & Kadir, 2012). Therefore, researchers have suggested that growing children in shelters and care require more than just food, clothing and shelter (Mohr, Martin, Olson,

Pumariega, & Branca, 2009). On the contrary they should also be given the opportunity to form relationships with adults in an environment that emphasizes the concept of kinship (Hobbs & McKechnie, 2012). The establishment of good relationships between guardians and occupants is very important as it affects the perception of adolescents to be more tolerant of accepting the rules (Rauktis, Fusco, Cahalane, Bennett, & Reinhart, 2011). However, the placement of children into shelter and care institutions has raised voluminous questions, particularly on the positive effects of children. Issues pertaining to the role of the institution in shaping and rehabilitating children in order to function as members of the community are often addressed and attracted the interest of many parties to understand more deeply.

Quality of Service of Protection and Care Institution

The placement of children at shelter and care institutions is often undermined by their effectiveness as it has been found to negatively affect children (Brack, Huefner, & Handwerk, 2012). Findings by Saim, Dufaker, Eriksson and Ghazinour (2013) indicates that the protection institutions in their studies have not met the standards as recommended by the United Nations Convention. Children are found to be adversely affected by health, education and difficulty obtaining employment when leaving institutions (Connolly & Morris, 2012; Lee, Seol, Sung, & Miller, 2011). Adolescents who live in shelter institutions also have a less favorable view of life and future prospects than their contemporaries in the normal environment (Helgeland, 2010; Jansen & Andenaes, 2011). In addition, the latest exposure to child safety and suitability is also a concern in the case of abuse of fellow members in the shelter (Connolly & Morris, 2012). Hence, the services provided by the institution should provide a rewarding life experience as it has a great impact on the success of the recovery process.

Life experience in the residential care has led to excessive socialization process due to the sharing of facilities (Abdullah, 2010) and sharing affection for replacing the pseudo family. However, this excessive socialization does not stimulate positive learning patterns as residents tend to spend time with non-academic activities (Vellymalay, 2011). Also, shelter-dwelling residents feel that attitudes and negative acts towards learning occur because of ineffective programs, unprofessional counselors, unattractive moral classes and outdated facilities (Yahaya, Abd Rahman, Hamdan, & Boon, 2010). This situation often puts this group of adolescents in low-label markers of academic achievement (Chambers & Palmer, 2011). Education is key to the development of prosperous humanity and should be given priority in the rehabilitation and care of children in institutions. This is because through good education it is proven to produce a brilliant and balanced individual in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual.

Placement in under-protection and care institutions has also been detrimental to the development of children as they prove to have social problems when they enter adolescence (Brack et al., 2012). This is because the main focus of the institution is more to meet physical needs than interaction (Nalasamy & Ah, 2013). In addition, protection and care institutions are found to be using one form of treatment on all occupants (Brack et al., 2012) without referring to children's background such as admission criteria (Yampolskaya et al., 2014) and clinical reports (Brack et al., 2012). Hence, the services provided by the institution should provide a rewarding life experience as it has a great impact on the success of the recovery process.

Strict and rigid rules are seen as one of the methods for controlling and disciplining children. As a result, most rehabilitation programs in protective and care institutions focus on behavioral modifications to reduce delinquency (Nalasamy & Ah, 2013) as the main cause of placement of children is behavioral and emotional problems (Schmidt et al., 2013). Strict rules, unclear (Saim et al., 2013) and inconsistent especially in giving penalties (Abd Manaf & Mokhtar, 2013) will cause misrepresentation of occupants. However, children see the restrictions and limitations imposed on them as a very strict regulatory form and for the convenience of the management alone (Schmidt et al., 2013). This led to protection and care institutions viewed as a bureaucratic organization, emphasizing the hierarchical concept and direction from the authority to guardians in controlling occupants

(Nalasamy & Ah, 2013). As a result, the services provided failed to meet the needs, wants and comfort of the occupants (Nalasamy & Ah, 2013) instead of causing them to become 'sick'.

In addition, stringent regulations also make the residents feel depressed leading to emotional abuse as they feel that there is no freedom. For example, strict institutional rules restricted the development of children due to limited space to communicate with the surrounding community (Schmidt at al., 2013). In this regard, past researchers have reported that strict and rigid institutional rules have contributed to critical behavioral and emotional problems (Chan, 2013; Saim et al., 2013). Therefore, this child needs special observation (Dorsey et al., 2012) because they want to be accepted in societies like other children (Rauktis et al., 2011). Socializing efforts of children will be more successful through strengthening the goal of caregivers in educating children in respect of adults and adhering to shelter regulations (Raj & Raval, 2013). In conjunction with the primary purpose of placing children in a disciplined environment and rigid rules is actually to shape self-development and to produce capable individuals (Mansor & Abu Samah, 2011). It is therefore necessary for the authoritative party to balance between the need to place restrictions and limitations on the movement of children based on age, ability and opportunity to practice skills, and to learn to adapt to the external environment.

The residents of this shelter and care institution expect the institutions to help them overcome the problems they are experiencing (Young, Chesney, Sperlinger, Misch, & Collins, 2009) by providing parallel services to children's development. Therefore, protection and care centers should emphasize quality in meeting the needs of children who will ensure the development of healthy children and be able to adapt well when in the outdoor environment.

The Relationship between Child Care Institution Protection and Care with Children

A stable family environment and relationships determine the quality of the development of children, especially through face-to-face interactions between children and their careers. Guardians or staff members of the institution are the most important elements in ensuring the education program in a quality and effective center. Organized care (Connolly & Morris, 2012) and the positive relationship between institutional guardians and residents will have a positive impact on the various aspects of residential life (Kassabri & Schwartz, 2013; Raj & Raval, 2013) as well as boosting trust and sense of belonging. The effects of losing and separating from parents will cause them no chance to form a good relationship (Robinson, Boris, Heller, Rice, Zeanah, Clark, & Hawkins, 2012). In addition, different environments such as frequent exchange of guards and frequent migrants are also a barrier to the formation of more stable relationships (Robinson et al., 2012) and thus affect psychosocial balance (Bruskas & Tessin, 2013). This effect of the exchange involves changes in systems affecting the self-adjustment process (Chambers & Palmer, 2011; Stanley, 2012) and mental health disorders (Abela, Abdilla, Abela, Camilleri, Mercieca, & Mercieca, 2012; Appleton & Stanley, 2010; Collin-Vézina et al., 2011; Longhofer, Floersch, & Okpych, 2011). In addition, the main problem of frequent switching of guardians and shelters is also the lack of guardian support in various aspects of child's life (Bruskas & Tessin, 2013). The change of guard left an impression on the child as the formed relationship did not have enough space to build trust to enable the comforters to share their feelings and life experiences.

Attachment Theory

The theory of attachment is a theory that sees the development of a human being as a result of the relationship formed during the early life of mankind since birth. The quality of early relationships formed between children and their parents will affect the future patterns of human life (Laible, Carlo, & Raffaelli, 2000). Attachment theory is also known as psychosocial theory as it explores the human experience created through the interaction between individual psychological conditions and its environment (Jacobs, Ilan-Clarke, & Bifulco, 2012; Young et al., 2009) and thus affect the psychosocial development of an individual throughout the his life (Barth, Crea, John, Thoburn, & Quinton, 2005; Bretherton, 1992). The contemporary attachment theory researchers believe that this theory is universal and acceptable in various cultures across various contexts of life (Wang &

Mallinckrodt, 2006; Wei, Russell & Zakalik, 2005). Attachment theory is very effective in explaining human development by emphasizing the quality of communication from personality and behavioral aspects (Ludolph & Dale, 2014), as well as social emotions and development at all stages of life (Dykas & Cassidy, 2011).

The theory of attachment is a collaborative work between John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) who seek to explain and measure the baby's response when separated from their mothers (Dozier, Lindheim, Lewis, Bick, Bernard, & Peloso, 2009). John Bowlby has revolutionized the thinking about the bond between mother and child and how the bonds are interrupted by separation, loss and death (Bretherton, 1997; Gauthier, Fortin, & Jéliu, 2004). While Ainsworth's contribution relates to the concept of a feeling of safety in the baby that is formed as a result of a relationship with a mother who affects self-confidence to explore the outside world (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bretherton, 1992). Although at the beginning of his study, John Bowlby only focuses on the role of the mother but nowadays it has been expanded with regard to the father (Fairchild, 2009), grandparents and all individuals considered the primary guardians of the children. This is in line with the findings of the study by Ainsworth (1979), which states that the baby is able to create multiple attachments, the baby will form a conjunction with anyone close or known around it according to the needs and situations.

The implication of the Attachment Theory on Child Protection and Care Institutions

Attachment theory has been widely used to understand more in-depth efforts in the field of child care that has been subjected to abuse, neglect, parental deaths and family problems (Fitton, 2012). Attachment theory is used to identify the potential risks that will occur when a child undergoes a transition or exchange of guards such as host families, social workers, teachers or relatives (Smyke, Zeanah, Fox, Nelson & Guthrie, 2008). Recent studies have found that there are four criteria for repetition of the themes related to the placement impacts: i) intervention and welfare of children's placement, ii) wellbeing and health, iii) social and educational adjustment, and iv) communication (Andersson, 2009). The success of nursing and rehabilitation institutions is measured through the stability of a child's placement as suggested by Andersson (2009) "placement is outcome".

Children with problems can develop positive new relationships based on multi-attachment concepts (Fitton, 2012) through the guidance of new guardians who are more sensitive to their needs (Andersson, 2009). Guardians play a key role by equipping loving, caring, unconditional acceptance and emphasizing emotional restoration (Andersson, 2009). This is very important because children who are experiencing delinquency need to build trust in guardians first. According to Smyke et al. (2008), children placed in care centers before the age of 24 months can form a better relationship with guardians. This is because at a very young age, humans can be restored more quickly and arrange safe-looking behaviors with new guards (Dozier & Bick, 2007). Recent studies have also suggested that child labor will change as the guard changes (Cicchetti, Rogosch, & Toth, 2006; Fisher & Kim, 2007; Velderman, Kranenburg, Juffer, & van IJzendoorn, 2006). Children who form this variety are said through the perspective of taking (Crittenden, 1992) that children understand and accept relationships with other individuals to help them develop the necessary skills.

Children separated from biological parents usually suffer from severe developmental and behavioral problems (Ajdukovi & Franz, 2005) and difficult to maintain relationships (Landa & Duschinsky, 2013). This is because the effects of change in life and transitions that occur such as moving from home to care center will activate the convergence system and trigger unsafe insecurity (Wei et al., 2005). This situation leads to recurring placement in the rehabilitation program and affects behavioral disorders, feelings and social relationships (Conners-Burrow et al., 2013). This is due to the failure to form a close relationship with the primary guard/primer in the early stages of childhood (Crittenden, 1992). Thus, conventional theory is useful for understanding the separation of children's response from the family and the symptoms they show when returning to the family after being in the rehabilitation and treatment program for a long time (Conners-Burrow et al., 2013).

The purpose of treatment or therapy at the institution is to introduce a restructuring of the child's internal work model on self-esteem and value to receive attention and care (Dorsey et al., 2012). If the ambiance and environment does not encourage the formation of positive relationships then the child will lose confidence in accepting new care and being motivated towards antagonistic attitudes (Landa & Duschinsky, 2013). Children who grow up in an institution are often associated with social and behavioral problems (Barth et al., 2005), including interruptions in breastfeeding relationships (Fitton, 2012). Although children are said to be in good shape with new guardians (Conners-Burrow et al., 2013), they are actually selective and choose only quality guardians to form relationships (Ijzendoorn & Kranenburg, 2003).

Sensitivity towards the needs of children according to the perspective of the attachment theory is the ability and willingness of a guardian to try to understand the behavior and emotion from the point of view of the child. Past studies have shown that guardians or staff with parenting and child-oriented skills can make changes and produce success (Wilson, 2006). Guardians who are able to understand the problems of children, will be able to find solutions, empathy and plan appropriate strategies to help children effectively (Aideuis, 2007). Hence, it will provide more comfortable space and communication opportunities for children to express themselves. Positive communication will encourage children to volunteer in any activity or recovery program and treatment.

Conclusion

The dynamic concepts of attachment need to be applied in the care and protection institutions system, taking into account parenting components in the role of each guard (Wilson, 2006). Dynamic attachment concepts are also a key framework for understanding the emotional needs of children, the problems in their relationships and their relationships with the guardians or staff of the institution (Wilson, 2006). All employees need to emphasize the emotion of the occupants and inculcate trust among the occupants so they believe in themselves and consequently alter their behavior. In conclusion, the paradigm orientation of the role of institutional care and rehabilitation should shift from providing treatment intervention to strategies to provide long-term care to troubled teens and guardians. Its strategy is to implement and maintain the relationship between the occupants and guardians.

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